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DE RUEHGB #3332/01 2510613
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
O 080613Z SEP 06
FM AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6755
INFO RUCNIRA/IRAN COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHEHAAA/WHITE HOUSE WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 003332

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E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: BAGHDAD'S DISTRICTS: A PRIMER

11. (U) Baghdad is home to nearly one-fourth of Iraq's 27 million residents, and the city is bisected north-to-south by the Tigris river. Administratively, it has nine urban districts. The following is a primer on those districts.

Karadah: Beverly Hills of Baghdad

12. (SBU) Considered one of the safest districts, Karadah District is located east of the Tigris in south-central Baghdad. Historically home to well-established Baghdad families, it is ethnically heterogeneous, with densely populated Shia neighborhoods near the river and Christian and Sunni neighborhoods farther east. Home to many current and former government elites (including President Talabani and Shia Coalition leader Abd al-Aziz al-Hakim), academics, and professionals, it is known as one of the major high-end shopping areas in the city. Many well-educated merchants and traders with upper-middle class incomes also live in the district. With its reputation as a safe area, Karadah has seen a large influx of individuals, especially Shia. Baghdad University is also located in this district. In contrast to the up-scale neighborhoods on the river, Zafaraniyah area in the east is populated by lower-income Sunnis who work principally in agriculture. Sunnis from other areas in Baghdad have migrated to Zafaraniyah, where security incidents occur frequently.

Karkh: Popular and with a View of the IZ

13. (SBU) West of the Tigris in the center of Baghdad, Karkh District is the smallest of Baghdad's districts, and the International Zone (IZ) takes up approximately one-third of the its total area. The district is traditionally known for its large green spaces and its outdoor amusement parks, many of which remain closed to the public. One of the oldest parts of the city, the district is predominantly Sunni, but also has a significant Shia population. Residents have widely varying incomes. With its aging infrastructure, it has serious problems with electricity supply and water distribution. Considered a relatively safe district, it was once a major commercial center and still houses the majority of the government's office buildings. (NOTE: Baghdad residents sometimes refer to the entire west bank of the Tigris as Karkh. END NOTE.)

Al Mansour: Educated, Secular, and Deserted

14. (SBU) In the northwest of the city, the eastern section of Al Mansour District has the reputation for being an upper-crust Sunni area. Generally well-educated and secular, many of the district's residents are professionals and technocrats. Western Al Mansour, in contrast, has lower income residents, many of whom work in agriculture. This

area has persisting infrastructure and security challenges. Since the Najaf uprising in May 2004 and then increasing after the mosque bombing in Samarra in February 2006, residents, particularly Sunnis, have been leaving the district. Many of the shops and business in the area are closed. With several Baghdad Security Plan (BSP) focus areas, the district has recently regained some life with the improving security and return of municipal services. Of note, Baghdad International Airport and Abu Ghuraib Palace are located on the western edge of the district. The areas of Ameriya, Ghazaliya, and Yarmouk are also within Al Mansour District.

Al Rasheed: Southern and Diverse

15. (SBU) Located in the southern area of the city, Al Rasheed District is geographically the largest district in Baghdad. It is populated primarily by Sunnis, with some Shia and Christian pockets. Considered a dangerous area, the district has seen many residents depart since 2003. The district has some housing developments dating back to the early 1900's and other relatively new ones from the 1980's. A generally middle-class area, it was known as one of the popular places for the former regime's military officials to live. With the commencement of BSP initiatives in Al Rasheed, the security situation has improved markedly. The areas of Masafee, Al Doura, and Zubaida are located in Al Rasheed.

Adhamiya: Divided by More than a Canal

16. (SBU) Adhamiya District is located in the northern part of Baghdad, east of the Tigris. It is divided by the Army Canal, with Sunnis living to the west and Shias residing in

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the east. The district was once considered one of the up-scale neighborhoods in the city, but has been in decline because of violence. Many shops and banks remain closed, but the recent improvement in security through BSP initiatives has increased street and commercial traffic. Representative of the district's deep sectarian divide, the Sunnis in the western half are often considered Sunni hard-liners, and the Shia in eastern Adhamiya identify with the more militant Shia of Sadr City, which located to the east of the district. The areas of Waziriya, Shaab, and Ur are located in Adhamiya.

Kadhamiya: Insular and Shia

17. (SBU) Kadhamiya District is the Shia heart of the city, with its nearly 100 percent Shia population and the religiously important Musa Kadham Mosque. Considered a safe area for its Shia residents, the district is populated by a mixture of upper-middle and working class individuals who are generally considered fairly close-minded. The district has recently seen an influx of Shia families from other parts of the city and country. With both commercial and residential centers, most residents do not travel outside the district. The areas of Shula and Nur are located in Kadhamiya.

Sadr City: Shia Town

18. (SBU) Home to many of the militant Shia, Sadr City District (formerly known as Saddam City) was a rigidly planned community built in the north of the city in the early 1960's by former President Abdul Karim Al Kasem. Home to approximately two million residents, it is by far the city's most densely populated district. Historically, the residents have a reputation for having low-levels of income and education, and the district has a reputation for being lawless and insular. A safe-haven for Shia, the district has seen an influx of Shia from other areas of the city. Dominated by its residential blocks, Sadr City has very little industry or agricultural activity, making it dependent on the rest of the city for employment and commercial activity.

Rusafa: The Commercial Center

¶9. (SBU) East of the Tigris in the center of the city, Rusafa District is predominately populated by Shia Arabs and Shia Kurds. It is the largest and most significant commercial center in Baghdad and has comparatively few residential complexes. The elite neighborhoods near the river notwithstanding, Rusafa's residents generally have low-levels of education and work as traders and labors. (NOTE: Baghdad residents sometime refer to the entire east bank of the Tigris as Rusafa. END NOTE.)

9 Nisan: Rural with a Bit of Everyone

¶10. (SBU) Located in eastern Baghdad, 9 Nisan is predominately Shia, but has insular pockets of Sunnis, Christians, and Palestinians. The levels of education and standards of living vary greatly across the district. Plagued by severe infrastructure problems, the area has faced significant challenges maintaining its agricultural industry, the mainstay of the district. Bordering on Sadr City, 9 Nissan is heavily influenced by events to the north. The area of Baladiat is located in 9 Nisan.
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